(d) Government has in the past recognised new successor states in a number of cases. Formal de-recognition of the SADR, was however carried out without according recognition to any successor state.

IT Ministers Conference

* 178. SHRI BJ. PANDA:
SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a meeting of the Information Technology Ministers of the States was held by him recently and whether any resolution was adopted on e-commerce and on software export;

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held and suggestions made; and

(c) the action taken for implementing the resolution?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) A meeting of State IT Ministers was held on 15/7/2000 wherein 14 Chief Ministers also attended. The agenda for the meeting was as below:

(a) IT for Masses

(b) IT Education in Schools, Colleges and Universities

(c) E-Commerce

(d) Right of Way

(e) IT Enabled Services

(f) Permitting software industry in their residential localities of Urban area.

After comprehensive and detailed deliberations, a Common Action Plan has been drawn as at Statement.

Statement

First National Conference of IT Ministers

Common Action Plan to promote IT in India

The first-ever National Conference of IT Ministers was held in New Delhi today, July 15, 2000. The Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, inaugurated the Conference, in which as many as fourteen Ministers of various States also participated.

The Conference thanked the Prime Minister for annaunsing the following three landmark decisions:—

(1) Full deregulation of National Long *Distance* Operations (NLDO), before August 15, 2000, with no restriction on the number of licenses to be issued.

(2) Complete demonopolization of undersea optical fiber connectivity for ISPs by August 15, 2000. The private ISPs will be allowed, either singly or jointly, to set up their own landing stations anywhere in India in collaboration with international undersea bandwidth carriers.

(3) A Task Force on human resource development in IT to prepare long-term strategy for significantly increasing the number of well-trained IT professionals. The Task Force will draw a plan to optimally use the existing infrastructure of the IITs, RECs, other engineering colleges and educational institutions to double their student intake from the next academic year and triple it in the next two years. The Task Force will comprise Ministers of HRD, IT and Finance, along with representatives from State Governments.

These decision will go a long way to strengthen the country's telecom infrastructure and infrastructure for IT education.

After comprehensive and highly productive deliberations, the conference adopted the following consensus Action Plan to promote IT in India:—

(1) The Union Government and the State Governments will allow free Right of Way facility, with no charge in cash or kind, to access providers to lay optical fiber networks along National highways, State highways, and other roads. Only a nominal restoration fee will be charged for providing this facility.

(2) The physical and civic infrastructure of the existing and emerging IT development centres will be improved.

(3) Development of Indian languages on computers and creation of useful content on the Internet in all Indian languages will be promoted.

(4) Facilities for IT education and IT-based education will be expanded and improved. For this, the resources and expertise of

the private sector educational organizations, will be synergized with those of government and other established educational institutions.

(5) The Union and State Governments will take specific measures *to* promote-govemance to improve transparency, accountability and efficiency.

(6) The Centre will reduce customs and excise regime for optical fiber, IT hardware, *set* top boxes, other Internet *access* devices, and TV sets for distance education and extension programs.

(7) There shall be no *Sales* tax and other State Taxes *on the* IT sector for the next three to five years.

(8) The accreditation *mechanism* for IT *education* shall be strengthened, by among other things, decentralizing the power of the AICTE to the States.

(9) The decision on setting up of private Universities should be speeded up. Private Universities should be set up in consultation with the State Governments.

(10) Availability of bandwidth must precede the demand. This is essential as there is a gap between demand and supply of the bandwidth namely international, national long distance, last mile and satellite. All the four elements of telecom infrastructure need to be enhanced and improved in terms of reliability and quality also.

(11) A special rate for Internet access to educational institutions may be considered. All ISPs may be urged to extend special rates. ISPs may also be urged to levy a flat rate for internet usage for all other Internet dial-up subscribers.

(12) Internet international gateways already sanctioned must become operational by August 15, 2000.

(13) Permission may be given for utilization of Ku band for educationa.1, health and other Government, broadcasts.

Growth in IT Sector

* 179. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased *to state:*

(a) whether it is a fact that Information Technology sector grew by 53 per cent during 1999-2000;